

THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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MR. SCARBOROUGH'S FAMILY.

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CHAPTER XXX. PERSECUTION.

IN the meantime Florence Mountjoy was not passing her time pleasantly at Brussels. Various troubles there attended her. All her friends around her were opposed to her marriage with Harry Annesley. Harry Annesley had become a very unsavoury word in the mouths of Sir Magnus and the British Embassy generally. Mrs. Mountjoy told her grief to her brother-in-law, who thoroughly took her part, as did also, very strongly, Lady Mountjoy. It got to be generally understood that Harry was a "mauvais sujet." Such was the name that was attached to him, and the belief so conveyed was thoroughly entertained by them all. Sir Magnus had written to friends in London, and the friends in London bore out the reports that were so conveyed. The story of the midnight quarrel was told in a manner very prejudicial to poor Harry, and both Sir Magnus and his wife saw the necessity of preserving their niece from anything so evil as such a marriage. But Florence was very firm, and was considered to be very obstinate. To her mother she was obstinate but affectionate. To Sir Magnus she was obstinate and in some degree respectful. But to Lady Mountjoy she was neither affectionate nor respectful. She took a great dislike to Lady Mountjoy, who endeavoured to domineer; and who, by the assistance of the two others, was, in fact, tyrannical. It was her opinion that the girl should be compelled to abandon the man, and Mrs. Mountjoy found herself constrained to follow this advice. She did love her daughter, who was her only child. The main interest of her life was centred in

her daughter. Her only remaining ambition rested on her daughter's marriage. She had long revelled in the anticipation of being the mother-in-law of the owner of Tretton Park. She had been very proud of her daughter's beauty. Then had come the first blow, when Harry Annesley had come to Montpellier Place and had been welcomed by Florence. Mrs. Mountjoy had seen it all long before Florence had been aware of it. And the first coming of Harry had been long before the absolute disgrace of Captain Scarborough, — at any rate before the tidings of that disgrace had reached Cheltenham. Mrs. Mountjoy had been still able to dream of Tretton Park, after the Jews had got their fingers on it, — even after the Jews had been forced to relinquish their hold. It can hardly be said that up to this very time Mrs. Mountjoy had lost all hope in her nephew, thinking that as the property had been entailed some portion of it must ultimately belong to him. She had heard that Augustus was to have it, and her desires had vacillated between the two. Then Harry had positively declared himself, and Augustus had given her to understand how wretched, how mean, how wicked had been Harry's conduct. And he fully explained to her that Harry would be penniless. She had indeed been aware that Buston, quite a trifling thing compared to Tretton, was to belong to him. But entails were nothing nowadays. It was part of the radical abomination to which England was being subjected. Not even Buston was now to belong to Harry Annesley. The small income which he had received from his uncle was stopped. He was reduced to live upon his Fellowship, — which would be stopped also if he married. She even despised him because he was the Fellow of a College. She had looked for a

husband for her daughter so much higher than any college could produce. It was not from any lack of motherly love that she was opposed to Florence, or from any innate cruelty that she handed her daughter over to the tender mercies of Lady Mountjoy.

And since she had been at Brussels there had come up further hopes. Another mode had shown itself of escaping Harry Annesley, who was of all catastrophes the most dreaded and hated. Mr. Anderson, the second secretary of Legation, he whose business it was to ride about the boulevard with Sir Magnus, had now declared himself in form. "Never saw a fellow so bowled over," Sir Magnus had declared, by which he had intended to signify that Mr. Anderson was now truly in love. "I've seen him spooney a dozen times," Sir Magnus had said confidentially to his sister-in-law, "but he has never gone to this length. He has asked a lot of girls to have him, but he has always been off it again before the week was over. He has written to his mother now." And Mr. Anderson showed his love by very unmistakable signs. Sir Magnus too, and Lady Mountjoy, were evidently on the same side as Mr. Anderson. Sir Magnus thought there was no longer any good in waiting for his nephew, the captain, and of that other nephew, Augustus, he did not entertain any very high idea. Sir Magnus had corresponded lately with Augustus, and was certainly not on his side. But he so painted Mr. Anderson's prospects in life, as did also Lady Mountjoy, as to make it appear that if Florence could put up with young Anderson she would do very well with herself.

"He's sure to be a baronet some of these days, you know," said Sir Magnus.

"I don't think that would go very far with Florence," said her mother.

"But it ought. Look about in the world and you'll see that it does go a long way. He'd be the fifth baronet."

"But his elder brother is alive."

"The queerest fellow you ever saw in your born days, and his life is not worth a year's purchase. He's got some infernal disease—nostalgia, or what d'ye call it? which never leaves him a moment's peace, and then he drinks nothing but milk. Sure to go off,—cock sure."

"I shouldn't like Florence to count upon that."

"And then Hugh Anderson, the fellow here, is very well off as it is. He has four

hundred pounds here, and another five hundred pounds of his own. Florence has, or will have, four hundred pounds of her own. I should call them deuced rich. I should indeed, as beginners. She could have her pair of ponies here, and what more would she want?"

These arguments did go very far with Mrs. Mountjoy, the further because in her estimation Sir Magnus was a great man. He was the greatest Englishman at any rate in Brussels, and where should she go for advice but to an Englishman? And she did not know that Sir Magnus had succeeded in borrowing a considerable sum of money from his second secretary of Legation.

"Leave her to me for a little,—just leave her to me," said Lady Mountjoy.

"I would not say anything hard to her," said the mother, pleading for her naughty child.

"Not too hard, but she must be made to understand. You see there have been misfortunes. As to Mountjoy Scarborough, he's past hoping for."

"You think so?"

"Altogether. When a man has disappeared there's an end of him. There was Lord Baltiboy's younger son disappeared, and returned out to be a Zouave corporal in a French regiment. They did get him out, of course, but then he went preaching in America. You may take it for granted, that when a man has absolutely vanished from the clubs, he'll never be any good again as a marrying man."

"But there's his brother, who, they say, is to have the property."

"A very cold-blooded sort of young man, who doesn't care a straw for his own family." He had received very sternly the overtures for a loan from Sir Magnus. "And he, as I understand, has never declared himself in Florence's favour. You can't count upon Augustus Scarborough."

"Not just count upon him."

"Whereas there's young Anderson, who is the most gentlemanlike young man I know, all ready. It will have been such a turn of luck your coming here and catching him up."

"I don't know that it can be called a turn of luck. Florence has a very nice fortune of her own."

"And she wants to give it to this penniless reprobate. It is just one of those cases in which you must deal roundly with a girl. She has to be frightened, and that's about the truth of it."

After this, Lady Mountjoy did succeed in getting Florence alone with herself into her morning-room. When her mother told her that her aunt wished to see her, she answered first that she had no special wish to see her aunt. Her mother declared that in her aunt's house she was bound to go when her aunt sent for her. To this Florence demurred. She was, she thought, her aunt's guest, but by no means at her aunt's disposal. But at last she obeyed her mother. She had resolved that she would obey her mother in all things but one, and therefore she went one morning to her aunt's chamber.

But as she went she was, on the first instance, caught by her uncle, and taken by him into a little private sanctum behind his official room. "My dear," he said, "just come in here for two minutes."

"I am on my way up to my aunt."

"I know it, my dear. Lady Mountjoy has been talking it all over with me. Upon my word you can't do anything better than take young Anderson."

"I can't do that, Uncle Magnus."

"Why not? There's poor Mountjoy Scarborough, he has gone astray."

"There is no question of my cousin."

"And Augustus is no better."

"There is no question of Augustus either."

"As to that other chap, he isn't any good—he isn't indeed."

"You mean Mr. Annesley."

"Yes; Harry Annesley as you call him. He hasn't got a shilling to bless himself with, or wouldn't have if he was to marry you."

"But I have got something."

"Not enough for both of you, I'm afraid. That uncle of his has disinherited him."

"His uncle can't disinherit him."

"He's quite young enough to marry and have a family, and then Annesley will be disinherited. He has stopped his allowance anyway, and you mustn't think of him. He did something uncommonly unhand-some the other day, though I don't quite know what."

"He did nothing unhandsome, Uncle Magnus."

"Of course a young lady will stand up for her lover, but you will really have to drop him. I'm not a hard sort of man, but this was something that the world will not stand. When he thought the man had been murdered he didn't say anything about it for fear they should tax him with

it. And then he swore he had never seen him. It was something of that sort."

"He never feared that anyone would suspect him."

"And now young Anderson has proposed. I should not have spoken else, but it's my duty to tell you about young Anderson. He's a gentleman all round."

"So is Mr. Annesley."

"And Anderson has got into no trouble at all. He does his duty here uncommonly well. I never had less trouble with any young fellow than I have had with him. No licking him into shape,—or next to none;—and he has a very nice private income. You together would have plenty, and could live here till you had settled on apartments. A pair of ponies would be just the thing for you to drive about and support the British interests. You think of it, my dear; and you'll find that I'm right." Then Florence escaped from that room and went up to receive the much more severe lecture which she was to have from her aunt.

"Come in, my dear," said Lady Mountjoy in her most austere voice. She had a voice which could assume austerity when she knew her power to be in the ascendant. As Florence entered the room Miss Abbott left it by a door on the other side. "Take that chair, Florence. I want to have a few minutes' conversation with you." Then Florence sat down. "When a young lady is thinking of being married a great many things have to be taken into consideration." This seemed to be so much a matter of fact that Florence did not feel it necessary to make any reply. "Of course I am aware you are thinking of being married."

"Oh yes," said Florence.

"But to whom?"

"To Harry Annesley," said Florence, intending to imply that all the world knew that.

"I hope not; I hope not. Indeed I may say that it is quite out of the question. In the first place he is a beggar."

"He has begged from none," said Florence.

"He is what the world calls a beggar, when a young man without a penny thinks of being married."

"I'm not a beggar, and what I've got will be his."

"My dear, you're talking about what you don't understand. A young lady cannot give her money away in that manner. It will not be allowed. Neither your

mother, nor Sir Magnus, nor will I permit it." Here Florence restrained herself, but drew herself up in her chair as though prepared to speak out her mind if she should be driven. Lady Mountjoy would not permit it! She thought that she would feel herself quite able to tell Lady Mountjoy that she had neither power nor influence in the matter, but she determined to be silent a little longer. "In the first place a gentleman who is a gentleman never attempts to marry a lady for her money."

"But when a lady has the money she can express herself much more clearly than she could otherwise."

"I don't quite understand what you mean by that, my dear."

"When Mr. Annesley proposed to me he was the acknowledged heir to his uncle's property."

"A trumpety affair at the best of it."

"It would have sufficed for me. Then I accepted him."

"That goes for nothing from a lady. Of course your acceptance was contingent on circumstances."

"It was so,—on my regard. Having accepted him, and as my regard remains just as warm as ever, I certainly shall not go back because of anything his uncle may do. I only say this to explain that he was quite justified in his offer. It was not for my small fortune that he came to me."

"I'm not so sure of that."

"But if my money can be of any use to him, he's quite welcome to it. Sir Magnus spoke to me about a pair of ponies. I'd rather have him than a pair of ponies."

"I'm coming to that just now. Here is Mr. Anderson."

"Oh yes; he's here."

There was certainly a touch of impatience in the tone in which this was uttered. It was as though she had said that Mr. Anderson had so contrived that she could have no doubt whatever about his continued presence. Mr. Anderson had made himself so conspicuous as to be visible to her constantly. Lady Mountjoy, who intended at present to sing Mr. Anderson's praises, felt this to be impertinent.

"I don't know what you mean by that. Mr. Anderson has behaved himself quite like a gentleman, and you ought to be very proud of any token you may receive of his regard and affection."

"But I'm not bound to return it."

"You are bound to think of it when

those who are responsible for your actions tell you to do so."

"Mamma, you mean?"

"I mean your uncle, Sir Magnus Mountjoy." She did not quite dare to say that she had meant herself. "I suppose you will admit that Sir Magnus is a competent judge of young men's characters?"

"He may be a judge of Mr. Anderson, because Mr. Anderson is his clerk."

There was something of an intention to depreciate in the word "clerk." Florence had not thought much of Mr. Anderson's worth, nor, as far as she had seen them, of the duties generally performed at the British Embassy. She was ignorant of the peculiar little niceties and intricacies which required the residence at Brussels of a gentleman with all the tact possessed by Sir Magnus. She did not know that while the mere international work of the office might be safely entrusted to Mr. Blow and Mr. Bunderdown, all those little niceties, that smiling and that frowning, that taking off of hats and only half taking them off, that genial easy manner and that stiff hauteur, formed the peculiar branch of Sir Magnus himself,—and, under Sir Magnus, of Mr. Anderson. She did not understand that even to that pair of ponies which was promised to her, were to be attached certain important functions which she was to control as the deputy of the great man's deputy. And now she had called the great man's deputy a clerk!

"Mr. Anderson is no such thing," said Lady Mountjoy.

"His young man, then—or private secretary, only somebody else is that."

"You are very impertinent and very ungrateful. Mr. Anderson is second secretary of Legation. There is no officer attached to our establishment of more importance. I believe you say it on purpose to anger me. And then you compare this gentleman to Mr. Annesley, a man to whom no one will speak."

"I will speak to him." Had Harry heard her say that he ought to have been a happy man in spite of his trouble.

"You! What good can you do him?"

Florence nodded her head, almost imperceptibly, but still there was a nod, signifying more than she could possibly say. She thought that she could do him a world of good if she were near him, and some good too though she were far away. If she were with him she could hang on to his arm,—or perhaps at some future time round his neck,—and tell him that she would be

true to him though all others might turn away. And she could be just as true where she was, though she could not comfort him by telling him so with her own words. Then it was that she resolved upon writing that letter. He should already have what little comfort she might administer in his absence. "Now listen to me, Florence. He is a thorough reprobate."

"I will not hear him so called. He is no reprobate."

"He has behaved in such a way that all England is crying out about him. He has done that which will never allow any gentleman to speak to him again."

"Then there will be more need that a lady should do so. But it is not true."

"You put your knowledge of character against that of Sir Magnus."

"Sir Magnus does not know the gentleman;—I do. What's the good of talking of it, aunt? Harry Annesley has my word, and nothing on earth shall induce me to go back from it. Even were he what you say I would be true to him."

"You would?"

"Certainly I would. I could not willingly begin to love a man whom I knew to be base; but when I had loved him I would not turn because of his baseness. I couldn't do it. It would be a great—a terrible misfortune; but it would have to be borne. But here——. I know all the story to which you allude."

"I know it too."

"I am quite sure that the baseness has not been on his part. In defence of my name he has been silent. He might have spoken out, if he had known all the truth then. I was as much his own then as I am now. One of these days I suppose I shall be more so."

"You mean to marry him then?"

"Most certainly I do; or I will never be married; and as he is poor now, and I must have my own money when I am twenty-four, I suppose I shall have to wait till then."

"Will your mother's word go for nothing with you?"

"Poor mamma! I do believe that mamma is very unhappy because she makes me unhappy. What may take place between me and mamma I am not bound, I think, to tell you. We shall be away soon, and I shall be left to mamma alone."

And mamma would be left alone to her daughter, Lady Mountjoy thought. The visit must be prolonged so that at last Mr. Anderson might be enabled to prevail.

The visit had been originally intended for a month, but it was now prolonged indefinitely. After that conversation between Lady Mountjoy and her niece two or three things happened, all bearing upon our story. Florence at once wrote her letter. If things were going badly in England with Harry Annesley, Harry should at any rate have the comfort of knowing what were her feelings—if there might be comfort to him in that. "Perhaps after all he won't mind what I may say," she thought to herself. But only pretended to think it, and at once flatly contradicted her own "perhaps." Then she told him most emphatically not to reply. It was very important that she should write. He was to receive her letter, and there must be an end of it. She was quite sure that he would understand her. He would not subject her to the trouble of having to tell her own people that she was maintaining a correspondence, for it would amount to that. But still when the time came for the answer she had counted it up to the hour. And when Sir Magnus sent for her and handed to her the letter,—having discussed that question with her mother,—she fully expected it, and felt properly grateful to her uncle. She wanted a little comfort too, and when she had read the letter she knew that she had received it.

There had been a few words spoken between the two elder ladies after the interview between Florence and Lady Mountjoy. "She is a most self-willed young woman," said Lady Mountjoy.

"Of course she loves her lover," said Mrs. Mountjoy, desirous of making some excuse for her own daughter. The girl was very troublesome, but was not the less her daughter. "I don't know any of them that don't, who are worth anything."

"If you regard it in that light, Sarah, she'll get the better of you. If she marries him she will be lost; that is the way you have got to look at it. It is her future happiness you must think of—and respectability. She is a headstrong young woman and has to be treated accordingly."

"What would you do?"

"I would be very severe."

"But what am I to do? I can't beat her; I can't lock her up in a room."

"Then you mean to give it up?"

"No, I don't; you shouldn't be so cross to me," said poor Mrs. Mountjoy. When it had reached this the two ladies had become intimate. "I don't mean to give it up at all; but what am I to do?"

"Remain here for the next month, and,—and worry her; let Mr. Anderson have his chance with her. When she finds that everything will smile with her if she accepts him, and that her life will be made a burden to her if she still sticks to her Harry Annesley, she'll come round if she be like other girls. Of course a girl can't be made to marry a man; but there are ways and means." By this Lady Mountjoy meant that the utmost cruelty should be used which would be compatible with a good breakfast, dinner, and bedroom. Now Mrs. Mountjoy knew herself to be incapable of this, and knew also, or thought that she knew, that it would not be efficacious.

"You stay here,—up to Christmas if you like it," said Sir Magnus to his sister-in-law. "She can't but see Anderson every day and that goes a long way. She of course puts on a resolute air as well as she can. They all know how to do that. Do you be resolute in return. The deuce is in it if we can't have our way with her among us. When you talk of ill usage, nobody wants you to put her in chains. There are different ways of killing a cat. You get friends to write to you from England about young Annesley, and I'll do the same. The truth of course I mean."

"Nothing can be worse than the truth," said Mrs. Mountjoy, shaking her head sorrowfully.

"Just so," said Sir Magnus, who was not at all sorrowful to hear so bad an account of the favoured suitor. "Then we'll read her the letters. She can't help hearing them. Just the true facts, you know. That's fair; nobody can call that cruel. And then, when she breaks down and comes to our call, we'll all be as soft as mother's milk to her. I shall see her going about the boulevards with a pair of ponies yet." Mrs. Mountjoy felt that when Sir Magnus spoke of Florence coming to his call, he did not know her daughter. But she had nothing better to do than to obey Sir Magnus. Therefore she resolved to stay at Brussels for another period of six weeks, and told Florence that she had so resolved. Just at present Brussels and Cheltenham would be all the same to Florence.

"It will be a dreadful bore having them so long," said poor Lady Mountjoy piteously to her husband. For in the presence of Sir Magnus she was by no means the valiant woman that she was with some of her friends.

"You find everything a bore. What's the trouble?"

"What am I to do with them?"

"Take 'em about in the carriage. Lord bless my soul! what have you got a carriage for?"

"Then, with Miss Abbott, there's never room for any one else."

"Leave Miss Abbott at home, then. What's the good of talking to me about Miss Abbott? I suppose it doesn't matter to you who my brother's daughter marries?" Lady Mountjoy did not think that it did matter much; but she declared that she had already evinced the most tender solicitude. "Then stick to it. The girl doesn't want to go out every day. Leave her alone, where Anderson can get at her."

"He's always out riding with you."

"No, he's not; not always. And leave Miss Abbott at home. Then there'll be room for two others. Don't make difficulties. Anderson will expect that I shall do something for him, of course."

"Because of the money," said Lady Mountjoy, whispering.

"And I've got to do something for her too." Now there was a spice of honesty about Sir Magnus. He knew that as he could not at once pay back these sums, he was bound to make it up in some other way. The debts would be left the same. But that would remain with Providence.

Then came Harry's letter, and there was a deep consultation. It was known to have come from Harry by the Buntingford postmark. Mrs. Mountjoy proposed to consult Lady Mountjoy; but to that Sir Magnus would not agree. "She'd take her skin off her if she could now that she's angered," said the lady's husband, who, no doubt, knew the lady well. "Of course she'll learn that the letter has been written, and then she'll throw it in our teeth. She wouldn't believe that it had gone astray in coming here. We should give her a sort of a whip-hand over us." So it was decided that Florence should have her letter.

TIMON OF ATHENS.

THE Life of Timon of Athens was first published in the folio of 1623. The play is very carelessly printed, and with the exception of the announcement at the outset, of *Actus Primus, Scœna Prima*, there is no indication of the author's design to

divide his work into acts or scenes. "The play is clearly not all Shakespeare's," notes one commentator, who declines to wonder that the poet left it unfinished, and allowed another dramatist to do what he listed with it. An earlier drama dealing with the story of Timon is believed to lie at the foundation of Shakespeare's play. It is doubtful, however, whether the poet was really indebted to the Timon of Athens, supposed to have been written or transcribed about 1600, and first printed by the Shakespeare Society in 1842: a play "evidently intended," as Mr. Dyce holds, "for the amusement of an academic audience," never performed in London, and "likely to have been read only by a few of the author's particular friends, to whom transcripts of it had been presented." As Steevens and Malone have pointed out, however, certain incidents are common to both plays. There is a scene in the manuscript, or academic play, resembling the scene of the banquet given by Shakespeare's Timon to his flatterers. Instead of warm water, the earlier Timon sets stones painted like artichokes before his guests, and afterwards beats them out of the room. He then retires to the woods attended by his faithful steward, who like Kent in King Lear, has disguised himself to continue his services to his master. In the earlier play, according to Malone, Shakespeare found among other incidents "the faithful steward, the banquet scene, and the story of Timon's being possessed of great sums of gold which he had dug up in the woods; a circumstance which he could not have had from Lucian, there being then no translation of the dialogue that relates to this subject."

The poet had, of course, read that twenty-eighth novel in Painter's Palace of Pleasure, which tells of "the strange and beastly nature of Timon of Athens, enemy to mankind, with his death, burial and epitaph;" and perhaps also the Account of Timon of Athens, in Sir Richard Barchley's Discourse of the Felicity of Man, 1598. With North's Plutarch, Shakespeare was well acquainted, and he has certainly availed himself very completely of the account of Timon contained in the Lives of Alcibiades and Mark Antony. It has been thought that the character of Apemantus must have been derived from Lucian's Dialogue, but as Mr. Douce suggests, "We are at liberty to doubt how far Apemantus is a copy from Lucian, or rather to believe that he is a highly finished portrait after a very slight

sketch by Plutarch." Charles Knight holds that Shakespeare's Timon is neither the Timon of Painter and Barchley, nor the Timon of Plutarch, but approaches nearer than the commentators have been willing to allow to the Timon of Lucian. At the same time, Mr. Knight is of opinion that the Timon of Shakespeare is no ordinary cynic, "but one of the most striking creations of his originality."

As an acting play, Timon of Athens has enjoyed little favour; its hold upon the stage has always been insecure. "The curses of Coriolanus, Thersites, Lear, ring through the play, and no glorious figures of Volumnia, Cordelia, rise to relieve its gloom," writes Mr. Furnivall, who further notes that the female characters, "except the unnamed ladies who dance," are unworthy and disreputable, and that generally the drama is deficient in action and characterisation, and is unequal even in the portions which are admitted to be Shakespeare's. Schlegel finds that of all the poet's works Timon of Athens possesses most the character of satire, a laughingsatire in the picture of the parasites and flatterers, and Juvenalian in the bitterness of Timon's maledictions on the ingratitude of a false world. The speeches of the hero are said to be "a dictionary of eloquent imprecation." The critics and commentators seem all agreed as to the simplicity and the slightness of the fable, which consists only of a single event, and pretends to little dramatic interest. Hallam wonders that Shakespeare should have seen in the single delineation of Timon a counter-balance for the manifold objections to the subject, and discovers a period in the poet's life "when his heart was ill at ease and ill-content with the world or his own conscience; the memory of hours misspent, the pangs of affection misplaced or unrequited, the experience of man's worser nature, which intercourse with unworthy associates, by choice or circumstance, peculiarly teaches; these, as they sank into the depths of his great mind, seem not only to have inspired into it the conceptions of Lear and Timon, but that of one primary character, the censurer of mankind."

In 1678, at the Dorset Garden Theatre, was represented Timon of Athens, or The Man Hater, an alteration by Shadwell of the original play. Downes records of this production that it was very well acted and the music in it well performed; "it wonderfully pleased the court and city, being

an excellent moral." It may be gathered, however, from the epilogue to *The Jew of Venice*, Lord Lansdowne's adaptation of *The Merchant of Venice*, produced at the Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre in 1701, that the success of Shadwell's version of *Timon* was due chiefly to the musical embellishments of Purcell, and that the unaccompanied speeches were disapproved:

How was the scene forlorn, and how despaired,
When Timon, without music, moralized!
Shakespeare's sublime in vain enticed the throng,
Without the charm of Purcell's Syren song.

It is difficult to understand, however, why this allusion to a play produced in 1678 should occur in an epilogue delivered in 1701. There may have been later representations of Shadwell's version of the play, otherwise to the younger play-goers of the time the reference to *Timon* of Athens in connection with Purcell's music could scarcely have been intelligible. In 1678 Betterton appeared as *Timon*, Harris as *Apemantus*, Smith as *Alcibiades*, and Medbourne as *Flavius*—or *Demetrius*, as Shadwell calls him; Mrs. Betterton and Mrs. Shadwell personated *Evandra* and *Melissa*, while *Thais* and *Phrynias*, the *Timandra* and *Phrynia* of Shakespeare, were represented by Mrs. Seymour and Mrs. Le Grand. *Melissa* is assigned a confidant and waiting-woman, *Cloe*; the character being undertaken by Mrs. Gibbs.

In his *Dedication* Shadwell professed to have made the History of *Timon* into a play. It was the fixed opinion of the adapters that Shakespeare's plays were hardly to be called plays until they had undergone systematic modification and mutilation. At a later date Cibber was to follow Shadwell and announce that altering King John he "had endeavoured to make it more like a play than he found it in Shakespeare." Genest says of Shadwell's alteration that it is "bad enough but not contemptible." Many new scenes and characters are introduced in the hope of fortifying the dramatic interest of the work. *Timon* is loved by a virtuous lady named *Evandra*, but he confesses to her that he entertains a decided preference for a certain *Melissa*. When his hour of adversity arrives, however, he finds that *Evandra* is still constant to him, while *Melissa* scorns him because of his poverty. When he retreats to the woods, digs, and discovers gold, the mercenary *Melissa* seeks a reconciliation with him, but he now renounces her love and professes his affection for the faithful *Evandra*. "This love business is

far from an improvement," notes Genest. Much injury is done to the character of *Flavius*, who is made to desert his master; many additions are made to the character of *Apemantus*, who is described as "a snarling stoic;" a new masque is substituted for Shakespeare's, and in lieu of warm water, toads and snakes figure in the banquet scene. After the death of *Timon*, *Evandra* stabs herself, the senators enter with halters round their necks, *Alcibiades* harangues them, and concludes the play with a lamentation of the fate of *Timon* and *Evandra*.

In 1707, at the Haymarket Theatre, Shadwell's *Timon* was presented with Mills as *Timon*, Verbruggen as *Apemantus*, and Barton Booth as *Alcibiades*; Mrs. Porter appearing as *Evandra*, and Mrs. Bradshaw as *Melissa*. At Drury Lane in 1720 the play was reproduced with a changed cast of characters: Mills, resigning the part of *Timon* to Barton Booth, now personated *Apemantus*; Tom Walker, to be afterwards famous as the first Captain Macheath, played *Alcibiades*; *Evandra* and *Melissa* being represented by Mrs. Thurmond and Mrs. Horton. At Covent Garden in 1733 Tom Walker was still *Alcibiades*, the parts of *Timon* and *Apemantus* being now assigned to Milward and Quin. It may be assumed that Milward's performance gave satisfaction, for he presented the play on the occasion of his benefit at Drury Lane, seven years later, his *Timon* being again supported by the *Apemantus* of Quin. *Alcibiades* was undertaken by William Mills—not the same actor be it noted as the Mills who appeared as *Timon* and *Apemantus* in 1707 and 1720. Mrs. Butler and Mrs. Pritchard represented *Evandra* and *Melissa* respectively. *Timon* of Athens was again played in 1745 at Covent Garden for the benefit of an actor named Hale, who probably played the hero with Quin for his *Apemantus* and Mrs. Pritchard for his *Evandra*. It seems to have been usual at this time to allot the characters of the Poet and the Painter to the comic performers of the theatre. In 1745, Theophilus Cibber played the Poet; the part having previously been assumed by Woodward, Pinkethman, Norris, and others. Apparently Shadwell's edition of the play was not again presented after this performance in 1745. *Timon* was absent from the stage until 1771 when he reappeared at Drury Lane under the auspices of Richard Cumberland, during the management of David Garrick. It may be assumed that

Purcell's musical accompaniments departed from the stage with Shadwell's version of Timon.

In the advertisement of his edition of *Timon of Athens*, Cumberland expressed a wish that he could have brought the play upon the stage with less violence to its author and not so much responsibility on his own part. But he had added to the list of dramatis personæ, and, as he urged, "new characters of necessity required some display." To strengthen the interest of the story he assigned Timon a daughter, named Evanthe, and constituted Alcibiades her lover. Shadwell's additions and alterations he dispensed with, and Evandra and Melissa disappeared from the scene. Cumberland prided himself upon having retained "many original passages of the first merit," and he trusted that in the contemplation of them his own errors would be overlooked or forgiven. "In examining the brilliancy of a diamond," he observed, "few people throw away any remarks upon the dulness of the foil." He admitted that as he was accountable for the entire part of Evanthe, and with very few exceptions the whole of Alcibiades, he had much to answer for, and that he was further bound to make his new matter harmonise with the old. "With what degree of success this was done," he writes in his memoirs, "it scarcely becomes me to say. The public approbation seemed to sanction the attempt at the first production of the play; the neglect with which the stage has passed it over since disposes us to draw conclusions less in favour of its merit." But Cumberland's additions involved much sacrifice of the text. The banquet scene was much mutilated, the share of Apemantus in that portion of the play being suppressed. Two of the scenes in which Timon's friends refuse him money were omitted. It was justly observed that Timon's prodigality became the less excusable, and that he forfeited commiseration, when he was represented as the father of a daughter, and was seen to be squandering upon sycophants the wealth that should have been her inheritance. Lucius, one of Timon's false friends, professes love for Evanthe, but his ardour cools when he finds that Timon is ruined. Timon's fine soliloquy at the opening of the fourth act, and his scenes with the thieves and with the Poet and Painter, are wholly omitted, while his dialogues with Alcibiades and Apemantus are much curtailed. The fifth act is nearly all the work of Cumberland. The

senators appear on the walls and surrender the city to Alcibiades, who promises to spare all but his own and Timon's enemies, Evanthe interceding for the citizens. It is shown that the treasure found in the woods by Timon had really been deposited there by Lucullus. The house of Lucius is plundered by the soldiers of Alcibiades. Evanthe and Alcibiades seek Timon in his wild retreat. He is found supported by Flavius. They entreat him to return to Athens. He relinquishes his misanthropy, manifests affection for his daughter, bestows her upon Alcibiades, dies, and the play ends.

Cumberland was blamed for certain errors which, as a scholar, he should have avoided. He had made his Grecians too Roman. His Alcibiades had spoken of Minerva when he should have said Pallas, and Evanthe had mentioned her Numidian slaves. The concluding incidents of the play were supposed to occur near the Temple of Faunus. It was pointed out that the Temple of Pan would have been more correct. Genest holds that in one respect Cumberland's adaptation is preferable to Shadwell's. Where Cumberland retains the original text he does not tamper with it; he omits, but he does not wantonly alter; whereas Shadwell will scarcely permit a scene to pass unadulterated, he is for ever substituting his own expressions for his author's. "The great fault," writes Genest, "of both Shadwell and Cumberland is, that they give us too much of their own and too little of Shakespeare; while it is almost superfluous to observe that their additions contrast badly with the original."

Not that Genest's reverence for the poet was excessive, however; he was disposed to think that both Shadwell and Cumberland had improved the part of the play which concerned the character of Alcibiades. The *Timon* of Cumberland's version was the distinguished actor Spranger Barry, his wife appearing as Evanthe. Apemantus was personated by Bannister, and Alcibiades by a young gentleman named Crofts, "his first appearance upon the stage."

In 1768, Love, the actor, published an adaptation of *Timon of Athens* which had been represented at Richmond, but which does not seem to have been exhibited upon the London stage. Love's version of the play is composed of selections from Shadwell and Shakespeare with a very few additions of his own. He preserves Shadwell's Evandra, but omits his Melissa. Altogether the alteration was thought to

be creditable to the actor and preferable to the versions of Shadwell and Cumberland; "but he would have done better to have omitted Shadwell entirely," judges Genest. Love assigned himself the part of Apemantus, Aikin appeared as Timon, and Catherley as Alcibiades.

No further attempts upon the play appear to have been made until 1816, when at Drury Lane Theatre, for the sake of Edmund Kean, Timon of Athens was produced, with certain modifications by the Hon. George Lamb. In his advertisement to the published play, Mr. Lamb wrote: "The present attempt has been made to restore Shakespeare to the stage with no other omissions than such as the refinement of manners has rendered necessary." It was admitted, however, that in the last scene some new matter had been interpolated, compiled chiefly from Cumberland's arrangement of the play. Shadwell was not laid under contribution in any respect: There had been much controversy touching John Kemble's dissyllabic pronunciation of the word "aches," in *The Tempest*. To avoid all question upon this head, the line occurring in the first speech of Apemantus to Alcibiades was printed as prose: "Aches contract and starve your supple joints." When "aches" recurred in the fifth act, in the line,

Their fears of hostile strokes, their aches, losses,
Mr. Lamb inserted the conjunction "and," to complete the measure and preserve the modern method of pronunciation. The third act concluded with Timon's speech, which should open the next act and be delivered "without the walls of Athens." There were other transpositions of speeches which seemed to be of questionable advantage, and generally it was thought that the omissions were excessive. The adapter, however, obtained much applause on the score of his discretion and modesty. His alteration was pronounced infinitely better than any of the former alterations. Genest, indeed, points to it as "a model of the manner in which Shakespeare's plays should be adapted to the modern stage."

Timon obtained seven representations only, and was not repeated at Drury Lane in any subsequent season. Kean's Timon was supported by the Apemantus of Bengough, the Alcibiades of Wallack, and the Lucius of Harley. Hazlitt seems not to have reviewed this revival of Timon. In his *Life of Edmund Kean* Mr. Procter dwells upon the undramatic quality of the work, and records that Kean was unable by

means of his own single strength to make it popular. "It is more a monodrama than a play. There is no one but Timon. All the other characters are simply persons upon whom his generosity or his wrath is to be expended; they draw him out, but do little or nothing themselves." Kean gave all the dialogue in the latter part of the play with prodigious effect; his retorts upon Apemantus and his curse on ungrateful Athens were made as fierce as voice and expression could render them. But it was thought that he did not exhibit the whole character. "We beheld in him the bitter sceptic, but not the easy, lordly, and magnificent Timon." Leigh Hunt accounted Timon's scene with Alcibiades as the finest in the performance. "We never remember the force of contrast to have been more truly pathetic," he writes. "Timon digging in the woods with his spade hears the approach of military music. He starts, waits its approach silently, and at last in comes the gallant Alcibiades with a train of splendid soldiery. Never was a scene more effectively managed. First you heard a sprightly quick march playing in the distance; Kean started, listened, and leaned in a fixed and angry manner upon his spade, with frowning eyes and lips full of the truest feeling, compressed, but not too much so; he seemed as if resolved not to be deceived even by the charm of a thing inanimate. The audience were silent; the march threw forth its gallant notes nearer and nearer; the Athenian standards appear; then the soldiers come treading on the scene with that air of confident progress which is produced by the accompaniment of music; and, at last, while the squalid misanthrope still retains his position and keeps his back to the stranger, in steps the young and splendid Alcibiades in the flush of victorious expectation. It is the encounter of hope with despair."

After this Timon of Athens seems not to have been again presented upon the stage until Mr. Phelps revived the play at Sadler's Wells in October, 1851. The admired tragic actress, Mrs. Warner, had terminated her connection with the theatre a few nights before, and it was judged perhaps a convenient opportunity to produce a drama which needed no feminine support. Mr. Phelps appeared as Timon, and was greatly assisted by the Apemantus of Mr. George Bennett and the Alcibiades of Mr. H. Marston. New and splendid scenery, dresses, and accessories were supplied, and the play was presented in strict

accordance with the original text. In the last act a panoramic movement of scenery was introduced, so as to show to advantage the march of the soldiers of Alcibiades and the change from the woods to Athens and back again. The performance was received with great applause, and Timon was played for a month and then withdrawn, to be again revived, however, in 1856 with even more painstaking and completeness than had distinguished its first production in 1851. In his *Journal* of a London Playgoer Professor Morley lays great stress upon the elaborateness of the performance: "Every member of the company is taught to regard the poetry he speaks according to its nature rather than its quantity. The personators of the Poet and the Painter in the first scene of the Timon, as now acted, manifestly say what Shakespeare has assigned to them to say with as much care and as much ease that they will be listened to with due respect, as if they were themselves Timons, Hamlets, or Macbeths. . . . Mr. Phelps in his own acting of Timon treats the character as an ideal, as the central figure in a mystery. As the Hibernian lord his gestures are large, his movements free—out of himself everything pours; towards himself he will draw nothing. As the disappointed Timon whose love of his kind is turned to hate, he sits on the ground, self-contained, but miserable in the relation from first to last, contrasting with Apemantus, whom 'fortune's tender arm never with favour clasped,' who is a churl by the original sourness of his nature, hugs himself in his own ragged robe, and worships himself for his own ill-manners. Mr. Marston's Apemantus is well acted, and helps much to secure a right understanding of the entire play." It is to be noted that the actor who in 1851 appeared as Alcibiades assumed the character of Apemantus in 1856. There has been no later exhibition of Timon of Athens on the scene.

TRUTHFUL PRESENTIMENTS.

"It is but foolery," is the response made by Hamlet to Horatio's suggestion that it were better to forego meeting Laertes if he felt ill at heart. Had he heeded "the kind of gain-giving as would perhaps trouble a woman," he might have escaped the poisoned rapier thrust, and lived to cheat Fortinbras of the succession to the throne

of Denmark. That weird consciousness of impending misfortune which comes no one knows whence or why, is not always to be disregarded with impunity. "Presentiments," says Charlotte Brontë, "are strange things—a mystery to which humanity has not yet found the key. I never laughed at presentiments in my life, because I have had strange ones of my own."

Very notable men have had that doubtful privilege.

"What is the hour of the day?" asked Wolsey of Cavendish. "Something past eight," was the answer. "Past eight," murmured the fallen minister; "past eight, eight of the clock, eight of the clock? Nay, it cannot be eight of the clock, for by eight of the clock shall you lose your master!" Cavendish had not mistaken the hour, but the cardinal's presentiment was fulfilled for all that, for he died the next morning as the clock was striking eight.

When Abraham Lincoln's ministers met at the council board on a certain afternoon, they wondered what had come to their chief. Instead of lolling in his chair, and telling quaint and irrelevant stories as was his habit on such occasions, the President sat silent, with his head resting on his breast, as if he were cogitating some sad and serious problem. "Gentlemen," said he very gravely, "something very extraordinary is going to happen, and that very soon." "Something good, sir, I hope?" observed the attorney-general, eliciting the reply: "I don't know, I don't know; but it will happen, and shortly too." That evening he was shot. No such cruel ending came to the life of the great captain who so long upheld the fortunes of the South, but writing of his last hours on earth, Mrs. Lee says: "We had been waiting dinner for him, and I said: 'You have kept us waiting a long time; where have you been?' He did not reply, and stood up as if to say grace, but no sound came from his lips, and he sat down in his chair quite upright, and with a sublime look of resignation on his countenance, but did not attempt to reply to our enquiries. That look was never to be forgotten, and I have no doubt that he felt then that his hour was come."

Mozart's sad notion that the requiem he had undertaken to write for his mysterious customer would be his own death-chant proved as prophetic as Hogarth's serious assent to the jocular suggestion that when *The End of All Things* was completed, then would be an end of the painter.

Flequier's intuition was not at fault when it made him urge the sculptor, taking his instructions respecting his last resting-place, to set to work at once, as there was no time to lose; when the tomb was ready for the tenant, the tenant was ready for the tomb. Tom Sheridan, bidding Angelo good-bye with the remark, "I have twenty months to live," gauged the term of his existence to a nicety. Awakened from a sick man's slumber by the baying of hounds, and the uproar attending the pulling down of a stag in a neighbour's garden, sport-hating Millet exclaimed, "It is an omen!" and in a few days took leave of pencil and palette for ever. Not long before his fatal illness, Prince Albert said to the Queen: "I do not cling to life. You do; but I set no store by it. If I knew that those I loved were well cared for, I should be quite ready to die to-morrow. I am sure, if I had a severe illness, I should give up at once. I should not struggle for life."

Like every other French commander who has dreamed of turning Irish disaffection to account, Thurot was glad enough to turn his back upon the Green Island. As he paced the deck of the ship that was bearing him to France there was no sign of coming conflict afloat, yet something made him suddenly start, stop in his walk, and exclaim, "I shall die to-day!" Ere many hours had gone, three English ships appeared in sight. An engagement ensued, and the Frenchmen tried to board—an attempt resulting so untowardly that their commander ordered the colours to be struck. The first man who attempted it was shot down before he could make the signal of surrender; a second met the same fate; and before a third could execute the order, Thurot himself fell to the deck, shot through the heart, and his presentiment was fulfilled. Equal prescience was shown by an officer of the army of Italy, who, under the conviction that he was doomed to die at midnight, received the order to hold himself ready to lead a night-attack at eleven o'clock with "Better in arms than upon one's bed." Something occurred necessitating the postponement of the advance for an hour, and, while marshalling his men, he was struck down, not by a shot, but by apoplexy, expiring exactly at midnight.

The presence of Admiral Porter at the American torpedo station at Newport, in August, 1881, was made the occasion for a display of the powers of the most insidious weapon of war human ingenuity has yet

devised, the carrying out of the day's programme devolving upon Lieutenants Spalding and Edes. Experienced in torpedo practice, they had no particular reason to anticipate evil, yet the first-named officer, on leaving his lodging to go upon duty, astonished his landlady by handing her his card, explaining that he did so because he wished her and his friends at the station to know where to send his body if anything happened to him. A few hours afterwards, Lieutenant Spalding and his brother-officer took their places in a torpedo-launch, the former taking the oars, the latter carrying the missile on his knees. When the proper time came, Lieutenant Edes leaned forward to arrange the apparatus in the water. As he did so, the torpedo exploded, and the fragments of two bodies went up in the air. The boots of Lieutenant Spalding were subsequently found but little the worse in condition, although not a trace of the feet they had covered was to be anywhere seen.

"I feel as if I were fated to die on this beautiful river," said a young English actress, as she talked to a comrade on the deck of a Hudson River steamboat. A week later, going from Albany to New York on the Oregon, she was suddenly taken ill, and died off West Point, on the most beautiful part of the river she so much admired. Other players have had presentiments justified by the event, or the author of *Thirty Years in Gotham*, to whom we stand indebted for the following histrionic examples, sadly deceives us:

An American actor named Chapman, who was also a dramatist in a modest sort of way, found it so difficult to arrange the details of a piece, which he called *The Mail Robbers*, exactly to his mind, that he observed to a friend that the play would be the death of him. A day or two afterwards he rode out of town to survey the surroundings of the place where he had laid the chief scene of the drama, and was thrown from his horse, escaping with a bruised shoulder. Congratulating him upon coming off so lightly, his friend joked him about his presentiment, but the actor was not to be laughed out of his notion, and persisted that his words would yet come true. And so they did, though in a somewhat roundabout way. In a part he was then playing, Chapman had to wear a suit of brass armour, and the night being very hot, he discarded his underclothing altogether. The armour chafing the bruised shoulder some verdigris got into the wound and

poisoned it, and of that poisoning he died.

"Fulfil your engagements like a sensible creature," was the well-meant advice of Mdlle. Louisette's confidante, when that tight-rope dancer consulted her upon the advisability of cancelling an agreement to appear at the Volks Theatre, in New York, for no better reason than that she had a presentiment the engagement would prove a fatal one. Sure enough it was so. Her first appearance was her last. She went through the performance without a hitch, but as she was stepping from the cross-trees to the stage, her gauzy dress caught fire at the footlights, and before help reached her was so badly burned, that medical skill was of no avail.

There is nothing repulsive about a gold watch, yet when Sheppard the actor took one from his mother's hand, as her birthday-gift, he shuddered, without knowing why, except that he felt it was destined to bring him misfortune. He wore it, however, out of respect for the giver, and wore it for years without anything unpleasant coming of it. One night, when he was playing at the National Theatre, Philadelphia, the house took fire, while he was on the stage. Sheppard got safely into the street, and then remembered that his watch was in his dressing-room; unwilling to lose the memento of his dead mother, he went back to the theatre, and was never seen alive again. His charred body was found next day under the gas-pipes; the fateful watch was in his pocket. The actor's presentiment in tardiness of fulfilment resembled that which troubled Mrs. Brownrigg. As the executioner was doing the last office save one for the wretched woman, an expression of horror came over her face, causing the clergyman to ask what new temptation assailed her. "I have many times," said she, "passed by this place, and always when near this spot of ground a dreadful horror seized me, for fear that one day or other I should come to be hanged, and the recollection terrifies me exceedingly."

Well aware of her deservings, it was no wonder if the apprentice-torturer had a bad quarter of an hour whenever she came within hail of Tyburn Tree; her prophetic fears were born of a coward conscience. Such was not the case with the honest miner, who, talking to his wife of the dangerous character of the seam he was working, said: "Hennie, I'm feared if there should be an explosion, I'll be knocked

about worst." This fear impelled him the next night, when the dread of something happening was strong upon him, to return home once and again after starting for the pit, only to shake off the feeling and go to his work, and his death.

At an inquest upon the body of a collier, who was killed by the fall of a rock in a Staffordshire mine, his wife deposed that the night before the accident, her husband woke complaining he had a ton of rock upon his head; and so sure was he of some ill befalling him, that it was only by dint of much coaxing that she persuaded him to go to work. Before leaving the house, he bent down to her child, saying, "Let me have my last kiss!" To make the story still stranger, it came out in evidence that the news of the poor fellow's death had hardly reached his home, when a cousin, much attached to him, looked in to enquire for him, impelled to do so by seeing, or by thinking he saw, the dead man standing before him in the roadway.

Coming events, it is plain, do cast their shadows before—sometimes. It does not follow that presentiments are to be trusted. They are like dreams. Only those which are fulfilled are noted, and that by reason of their scarcity.

SONG.

THE girl sat under the beetling cliff,
Oh, the sweet singing out of the sea!
She watched the white sail of the dancing skiff;
She watched as it tacked and made the land,
She watched the sharp keel run on the sand,
And she thought, "He is coming to me, to me,"
As the sailor sprang from the gay boat's side
As it lay in the lap of the ebbing tide.
Oh, the sweet singing out of the sea!

The two sat under the great rock's shade,
Oh, the sweet singing out of the sea!
They saw the sunset glow and fade;
They heard the low waves' ceaseless chime,
To the vows that mocked at change and time,
As he swore by the steadfast tides to be
True and tender, through weal and woe,
And she blushed to the kiss he hallowed so;
Oh, the sweet singing out of the sea!

The girl sat under the cliff alone,
Oh, the sad singing out of the sea
And the wind's low sob, and the waves' low moan,
Blent with the passionate weeping for him
Whose falsehood had made the fair world dim;
And she sighed, "What has life left yet for me,
Whose joy is blighted, whose trust is fled,
Whose hope, like the rose, its leaves has shed?"
Oh, the sad singing out of the sea!

The great sea heard, as under the shade—
Oh, the sweet singing out of the sea!—
Its moonlit ripples soft music made,
And it sang, "The world with its smiles and tears,
Changes for aye with the changing years;
Come, mourner, for rest and peace, to me.
Take the lesson I give through time and tide,
Do thy duty, nor reck of aught beside;"
Oh, the sweet singing out of the sea!

IN THE GLOAMING.

A STORY.

"NAY, nay, lass, don't take on so about it, it's not for long we'll be parted; only a few months maybe or a year at most, and then when I come back chief mate of the Saucy Jane, we'll be wedded, love, and you'll be all my own for ever."

Living in the same village from earliest childhood; taught their lessons side by side in the same class at school; joining in the same sports, and sharing in the joys and sorrows which come in life alike to young and old, the boy and girl—they were scarcely more even now—had "grown up for each other," so the gossips said. But it was only since his return from sea in the summer that Frank had really found out how much he thought of his pretty neighbour, and had told his love to willing ears.

Now, alas! the walks and talks which had been so dear to the lovers must come to an end. To-morrow Frank must be once more on the ocean, and Bessie left behind must dry her tears and go on her daily round of common duties with the bravest heart she can assume.

And so, on this the last evening they would pass together, Frank and Bessie had wandered down to the seashore to exchange parting words in the gloaming, unseen by any eyes save those of the gulls which flapped lazily overhead.

"Come, cheer up, Bessie. A sailor's wife, and, if all goes well, that is what you'll be in another year, should have a brave heart, you know. The months will soon slip by, and we shall be back again before you expect us, depend upon it; so no more tears, love."

"It may seem short to you," sobbed she, "but to me, shut up all day long with grandmother, it will be weary work waiting, and I know I shall lie on stormy nights listening to the winds and fearing for you."

"As if a storm would be likely to be on both sides of the world at once! You forget we are not going on a coasting voyage this time, but are bound for the other side of the globe, and see if I don't bring back the very prettiest things you ever saw in your life! I should like my wife to have jewels and gold, and all the grandest things I can get for her."

"And she sall walk in silk attire,
And siller hae to spare,"
sang he in conclusion.

"I would rather have you, Frank, than all the gold, jewels, and silks in the whole world, and you know that well," was the reply, given with such an increase of sobs and tears, that for full five minutes Frank could do nothing but soothe and calm his companion.

He succeeded at last, and so much had they to say to each other that most of the lights were out in the village when at length the lovers passed up its quiet street, and grandmother was nodding in her easy-chair when Bessie entered the cottage, half fearing to be reproved for staying out so late.

But the old woman remembered her own young days and would not be hard upon her favourite grandchild at such a time as this.

So Bessie stole away to her own little room to pray for her lover's welfare, and when she fell asleep in the early dawn, it was to dream over again that she was walking on the seashore supported on a manly arm, and so vivid was the dream that it was with a start she awoke to the reality that the day of parting had come, and that in a few hours she and Frank would be separated from each other for months or years to come.

Brightly the sun shone down that autumn day, and the Saucy Jane spread her sails and fluttered her flags, as if she were a living thing and laughed at the bustle and confusion around her. Proudly she threw the spray from her prow, when, the last farewells said, and the final preparations completed, the anchor was weighed, and the gallant ship glided gracefully away on her distant voyage.

There were tearful faces watching her, and aching hearts left behind, but what of that? "Men must work and women must weep," and the everyday life must go on whether hearts are breaking or no, and so, ere many days had passed, the dwellers in the little port were going on in their ordinary routine, and the outer world was lost in the more absorbing interests of that inner world in which those who struggle and toil for daily bread find themselves living. There is little poetry, but a great deal of hard prose, in such lives as these.

Bessie and her grandmother were among these busy toilers, and cheerfully did the young girl work to lighten the labours of the old woman who had been all in all to her from the time when the child had come to fill unconsciously the void which death had made in that cottage home.

For on one terrible night, long spoken of and remembered, the fishing-boats had gone out with their crews as usual and had never returned, save as bits of wreckage picked up weeks afterwards on the shore, and two or three drowned men found lying on the sands wholly unrecognisable by their nearest and dearest friends!

And on that terrible night, while yet the storm raged and the winds howled and screamed, a life returned to God who had given it, and another life entered this world, and found for itself a home in the heart of a widowed, childless, lonely woman, who forgot her own sorrows while ministering to the wants of the little one who had come to supply the place of the dead.

The care bestowed upon this child of her child—the dearly loved daughter whose thread of life had been thus prematurely snapped—was doubly repaid to the old woman, for those tiny baby fingers soothed her as nothing else could, and she watched with more than a mother's fondness the first dawnings of intelligence in the face of her darling. And when, as time passed by, Bessie grew up to be the pride of the village, what so sweet to her grandmother's ears as the praises which the young girl's modest looks and conduct called forth from the neighbours?

Gladly had she seen the attachment between Frank and Bessie, feeling sure that she would leave her darling in good hands when the day came for the summons to that "better land" where so many she had loved had gone before her.

Already she called Frank her grandson, and looking forward to his return from sea, cheered Bessie, who in spite of her efforts to the contrary would have fits of depression sometimes, by talking of the bright and happy days they would all three spend together when he came back to claim his bride.

So days became weeks, and weeks months, and life went on as usual in the village; but Bessie took no part in the merry-makings with which the young folks beguiled the winter evenings and to which they vainly urged her to come.

"I don't know what's come over you, Bessie," they said to her again and again; "you used to be the merriest dancer amongst us, and now you never care even to hear about our parties. Just come this once. Surely your grandmother will spare you for one evening."

But Bessie only shook her head with a smile and declined.

"Grandmother could spare me well, she says so; but I couldn't be dancing with any pleasure while Frank's away, so don't ask me to come."

Truly it would have been no pleasure to Bessie to dance and talk with the rustic swains at these merry-makings, while all the time her thoughts were far away. She liked best to be alone, and whenever it was possible she stole away in the gloaming to the seashore, and went again in fancy over the parting words of her sailor lover, and longed for his return.

On many a stormy night, too, did she lie awake and pray for his safety, and glad indeed was she when the winter was over and the lengthening days of spring and summer made her look hopefully for the return of the ship.

"I don't think it's right for that girl to be moping so much alone, neighbour," said an old fisherman one day. "I meet her so often of an evening down by the shore, and she seems to shun all her former companions in a way that's not natural."

"She likes best to be alone, and as she is always bright and cheerful with me I won't thwart her," was her grandmother's reply; "she is a dear good child, and I long as much as she does to see Frank home again."

"Aye, aye, so do we all; he's a steady lad and will make the girl a good husband, and she deserves it, neighbour, that I must say. We all know how well she does her duty by you; not but what she ought to repay your kindness to her; but we don't always have our dues in this life, and it's a pleasing sight when young people care for and attend to their elders as she does. But still, I will say, if she were my daughter I'd rather see her a little more lively, like the other girls."

"Wait till we get Frank back and then see if she won't be merry again; besides, you wouldn't have her laughing and talking with all the lads as if she were not already engaged? You wouldn't have liked it, when you were young, neighbour, and had left behind you someone you loved, to hear that she was as gay as possible during your absence."

"Well, perhaps not, perhaps not; we must remember we were all young once, and maybe the girl is in the right so far; but it will be all the harder for her if anything should happen to go wrong with the ship, and we never know what to expect in a long sea-voyage. However, we won't be croaking like ravens and expecting the

worst; time enough when it comes, the Lord knows. Good-night to you, neighbour."

And shaking his head portentously the old fisherman gathered up his nets and departed.

"If anything goes wrong with the ship," repeated his listener to herself slowly and solemnly; "may Heaven help us if it does. It would just break the child's heart and mine too! But here she comes, and I won't be the one to put ideas of evil tidings into her head."

Yet though she smiled and talked as usual to her darling during the evening and entered into all her plans, the fisherman's ominous words would recur to the old woman and kept sleep from her eyes till long after the child of her affections was wrapped in happy slumbers dreaming of her absent love.

But with the bright morning sun came hope that all would be right in the end, and ere a week had passed Bessie and her grandmother alike were looking forward to the arrival of the Saucy Jane with equal interest and no fears for the future.

Summer sped on, each day saw a slight change in Nature's robe of green; imperceptibly she was assuming her garb of russet-brown, and the starry flowers in her crown were fading one by one to be replaced by autumn's richer, if less beautiful, harvest wreath of fruits.

Anxiously now each evening did Bessie watch for the return of him she loved. It was time the ship was heard of, so said all the pilots and fisher-folk who congregated each day down by the jetty, and telescope in hand scanned the horizon for strange sail, and told yarns the while of wonders seen by them and perils passed through on the great deep till their auditors stood open-eyed and agape with speechless astonishment.

Yes, it was time the ship came home now; she was overdue when autumn succeeding to summer was in turn giving place to winter, and heavy seas swept the Channel, and wives whose husbands had gone out fishing sat watching and waiting with sinking hearts lest they should never see them more.

"Time the ship came home!" Even the most apathetic roused up at last and wondered what had become of her. Yes, it was time that her voyaging was over, aye, long before this.

But there had been cyclones in the Indian seas, while a summer's calm rippled the wavelets on English shores; and the

Saucy Jane never came home, but lay with all her crew fathoms deep beneath the waves, to rest there till the sea gave up her dead.

Bitter tears were shed when the news, which was whispered about at first as if only half believed in, was confirmed by a sailor whose more fortunate ship had ridden out the gale.

Then, and not till then, was all hope given up, and widows and orphans mourned their dead.

And Bessie, was not she among these mourners? Faithful and true as she had ever been to her lover in life, did she not now bewail and lament for him dead, with bitter sorrow and unconquerable grief? No; though women and children burst into tears and mourned bitterly for those who would never come back, and even though strong men turned away with sobs and passed their horny hands over suddenly-dimmed eyes, Bessie's cheeks paled not, and no tears fell.

She seemed as though she heard not, as if she understood not what was said. With eyes, from which all expression had gone, she looked round her as if she saw not the grief-stricken faces of those who wept for their dead, nor the outstretched hands of her grandmother who forgot her own grief in terror at this deadly apathy.

"Oh, Bessie, Bessie, my darling child, don't take it in this way; it breaks my heart to see you look like that! If you would but cry ever so little it would do you good. Come and lay your head on grannie's bosom where you've lain so many a time as a baby, and let her help you to bear this sorrow;" and the poor trembling old woman put her hand on her grandchild's arm.

But Bessie unheeding it passed on to the seashore, and sympathising neighbours led the almost broken-hearted grandmother back to her now desolate hearth and strove to comfort her as best they could.

"Let her alone, dame, now; tears will come by-and-by; the girl's stunned at present, and can't take in the tidings at all."

"A night's rest will do her good; the poor thing was so wrapped up in Frank that she don't yet know what to make of the news."

"Cheer up, mother, and maybe it will all come right. You sit down here, and let my wife look after you a bit, and I'll go down to the shore and see that no harm

happens to the girl," added the third and most practical of these sympathisers.

"I thank ye all kindly, neighbours," said the weeping woman, "and I trust in Heaven to bring it all right, for this is the sorest trial that has yet befallen me, and I've had many of them in my time as you all know."

But in spite of all these hopeful words it never did come right in this world. Days passed, and Bessie remained in the same unconscious state.

The doctor was summoned, but all he could say was: "An evident shock to the system which time alone can cure."

And the rector who came on an errand of mercy to his stricken parishioners, was fain to go away without speaking, the words he had intended to say, for before that dumb grief he was powerless.

Time has passed on since the day on which the tidings of the wreck of the Saucy Jane reached the sea-coast village, and the changes are many, but Bessie is still there.

Doctor, rector, grandmother, and all of that generation sleep the sleep of the just, and a new set of fisher-folk inhabit the old homesteads.

And on the shore, ever as the gloaming comes round, may be seen a woman who shades her eyes with her hand as she looks out over the sea and murmurs to herself: "Oh, Frank, my love, my love, are you ever coming home to me again!"

She is old now, and her once dark-brown hair is thickly streaked with grey, her cheeks are pale and thin, and her eyes lustreless, but her ever placid face still bears traces of the beauty which had been hers in youth.

Kind friends supply her simple wants, and Bessie is well cared for, and is a favourite with the children who look upon her as quite one of themselves, asking her to join in their games, and consulting her in all the little matters which concern and interest them; and in the summer she may be seen the centre of a happy group weaving daisy-chains, or telling the hour by the thistledown as they sit on the cliffs, herself the most childlike of the little company, with no thought for anything but the present moment and its pleasures.

She seldom speaks, and never refers to the past. All her youthful life seems blotted out as if it had never existed.

Frank's name alone remains in her mind of all those she formerly knew, and his name is only repeated when in her lonely wander-

ings she pauses in the gloaming on the shore of that mighty ocean over which her sailor lover sailed away one autumn morning never to return.

GEOFFREY STIRLING.

BY MRS. LEITH ADAMS.

PROLOGUE.

CHAPTER IV. THE ANGEL ON THE THRESHOLD.

THE moonlight which shone so sweet and fair on Becklington market-place, paving it with silver, touched also into unreal and fairy beauty the pine-trees that gathered round the White House, a many-gabled, ivy-mantled building which ought surely to have been called the Green House instead, for rose, and clematis, and wistaria had so wrought for it a dainty brodered robe of leaf and flower, that its walls were hardly visible except very high up in the pointed gables, where the white might be seen crossed by heavy black beams, after a picturesque fashion more general then than now.

The White House was no pretentious mansion; its highest ambition may be said to have been comfort combined with homely beauty of well-wooded surroundings, gardens and meadow-land.

It stood about the space of two miles from the town, counting by the road; and half a mile or so less by the river, which in one of its fantastic turnings cut off an angle.

The garden lay to the road; from the back of the house a slope of green led to the river, ending in a light rail and a gateway.

Here in summer-time was rich store of yellow iris to be found, rearing golden heads from amid blue-green flags, and showing, ever so far down, faint golden reflections like flecks of sunshine. Forget-me-nots, too, lurked by the water's edge, almost touching the ripples as they passed.

Such was the home of Geoffrey Stirling.

There, in the years that were past, had fair flowers of hope, fair dreams of joy, budded but to fade; decay forerunning fruition. There had Geoffrey Stirling learnt that life was not, for him, fated to be a realisation of passionate desire, but rather a lesson of self-discipline.

He grew habituated to the voice of complaining and discontent, to the constant repetition of self-pitying lamentation; a kind of domestic dropping-water well calculated

to wear away the sternest powers of endurance.

This home of his was a pretty, cosy nest of a place. In its garden were neither squares and ovals, nor yet long narrow lines of massed flowers, as is the fashion in this day; rather did each plant grow at its own sweet will, and Nature, who never makes a mistake or brings about a discord of tints, had it all her own way.

"Let 'em gang as they've a moind," old Jeremy, the head man, boatman, and general factotum at the White House, used to say, alluding to the shrubs and plants in the long rambling borders; "and they'll mak' a posy fit for a queen."

So golden rods, evening primroses, and tapering lupins grew into untidy but picturesque tangles, and the great cabbages thrust their pink faces up among the rest; gigantic posies flourished here and there and everywhere, and Jeremy did just as much, or as little—oftenest the last—as seemed good unto him.

In truth this course of conduct was adopted by most of the servants at the White House, that household spur to energy, the overlooking eye of a mistress, being a thing that the domestic kingdom lacked. How can any woman be for ever dwelling upon this ailment or that, fancied or otherwise, and yet look well to the cares of her household?

Dr. Turtle, coming down the winding gravel sweep which led from the house to the road, had oftentimes been seen to shake his head, inhale an immense long-drawn pinch of snuff, and then shake his head again.

He had an idea that if the house chanced to take fire, and Madam Geoffrey had to jump up off her couch and run for her life, it would do her good, but he was both too politic and too polite to say so.

When he sometimes looked in of a summer's evening and saw the house-master, tired with his day's work in the counting-house, lying back in his chair with little Ralph squatted on a stool by his side, quiet over a picture-book, yet with loving watchful eyes observant of the dark weary face of the father he loved with such a strange unchildlike passion of great tenderness, the doctor would inspire from the silver-lidded box again, thinking the while that the domestic music at the White House had about it too much of the duet and too little of the trio.

Dr. Turtle was not a particular favourite with Mrs. Geoffrey. She said he had no

power of sympathy, and occasionally a sharpness of manner that was irritating to the patient and apt to raise the pulse and cause palpitation.

That so urbane a person as Dr. Turtle could now and again be betrayed into a passing abruptness of manner spoke volumes for the provocation he received: it also said much for the lady's husband, who, to use Nurse Prettyman's own words, "was as kind and tender to the poor mistress as if she were a sick lamb and him the shepherd o' the flock."

Nurse Prettyman was a person of consequence at the White House. She it was to whom Master Ralph flew for comfort in all his baby-troubles. It was her hand that placed a "beaupot" on the table in the master's room, because he loved to have flowers about him; her care that watched over and nursed him when, on rare occasions, he fell ill.

If the right person will not do things, then someone else must, and the someone else who did most things at the White House was Nurse Prettyman.

She was a buxom motherly woman, well on in what is called middle age. She was knowledgeable in the art of knitting—indeed, it was supposed that in the delicate operation of "turning a heel" she had no equal.

She always wore a small sheath buckled to her left side, and in this sheath one knitting-pin was wont to rest while the other went click, click against it, as the stocking grew.

Nurse Prettyman would walk about the garden scolding Jeremy, knitting all the time; she would watch little Ralph at play, and all the time those busy shining pins were never still. The child looked upon them and their results as integral parts of her individuality, as if his dear old nurse were a kind of tree whose natural fruit was stockings and comforters, and all such woolly and useful gear.

Mrs. Prettyman had a comely face, rosy-cheeked and grey-eyed; she wore a great mob-cap, and a garment called a tippet over her ample shoulders; treated her mistress like a spoiled child; made a young idol of "Master Ralph;" and looked to the master's comfort in a hundred little ways of which perhaps he would only have become conscious had he missed them.

It was this invaluable woman who, on the morning of that eventful day already chronicled, tapped softly at Geoffrey Stirling's door to say that a messenger

had come from the bank in hot haste laden with an urgent message, to be delivered to his ear alone; had knocked again more loudly, and then, receiving no answer, had ventured in, to find him sleeping with his head upon his arm and a tired white face turned to the light from the window, that was shining full upon him, yet had not broken in upon his slumber—the heavy dreamless rest of one who has been ill and is reaching convalescence.

"What is it?" he said, opening slow dark eyes upon the figure by his bed. "Is your mistress worse?" and as the words passed his lips he grew all alert, sitting up quickly and pushing back the tangled grey-lined locks from his brow.

Throughout all that day did Nurse Prettyman at intervals bemoan herself in that she had had to rouse her master from that sweet refreshing sleep—"a better cure than all the medicines in Dr. Turtle's surgery for a man as weak as water, and little fit to be worried about business and such-like," said the dame, tossing her head in scornful defiance of all bank clerks and messengers, with Anthony Geddes at the head of them.

As to Mrs. Geoffrey, no sooner did she understand that something was amiss than she went into strong hysterics, had the blind in her room lowered, and ordered a dish of white wine whey to be prepared without delay—that condiment being supposed to be a "supporting" kind of thing.

"Why, if the master was dead you couldn't take on worse," said Nurse Prettyman; "and there's Master Ralph half frightened out of his little senses!"

The child, with great grave eyes, was watching his mother, and wondering what might be the trouble she raved of—the trouble that had fallen on the head of his father, and caused him to look so strange, and forget to kiss his boy, as he drove off in the gig, hardly giving poor old Jeremy time to scramble up behind.

Only seven years of life had passed over Ralph's curly pate, but that strange and close companionship between himself and his father, of which mention has already been made, together with the fact of his being an only child, had made him over-thoughtful for his age, like a fruit that ripens before its time in artificial warmth. He was a wonderfully helpful little fellow, too! One would almost have thought, watching him, that with his tiny hands he was trying to help his father bear the

burden of life, weighted as it was with a foolish woman's selfish fancies.

The child, too, had a certain pride in his mother's faded prettiness that was a reflex of his father's gentle bearing towards her.

"Daddy and I have to take care of you, you know, mamma," he would say with a wise and wistful look upon his face, thus recognising the close partnership in responsibility that is the outcome of a great love.

In like fashion, this new trouble, whatever it was, pressed upon Ralph as well as on his sire.

The child wandered about disconsolate. He did not care to see the pigeons fed, though he saw cook passing into the yard with a shallow basket of corn upon her arm. He did not care to play with the tawny setter-pup, who came blundering along on soft yellow paws many sizes too big for him, and even lay down on his back in the grass with all the four of them in air, to attract his young master's attention, in vain.

Something was wrong with father; something worse even than being ill, and lying still with Ralph sitting beside him in case he might want anything. What then did it signify whether the pigeons had their dinner or not, and why did the pup want to romp and play just as if nothing were the matter?

When father came home, much later than usual—and looking, oh, so pale and wearied—Dr. Turtle came with him. Ralph, from the ambush of the squat dark oak balustrades that ran across the nursery landing, saw them come in together. He heard the doctor say, twice over, "Now, my very dear sir; now, my dear sir," saw him take a huge pinch of snuff, and then the library door shut upon the pair. Presently arrived the vicar of the square-towered church in The Meadows, a high and mighty functionary, whom Master Ralph, with the calm daring irreverence of childhood, looked upon as one to be held in high estimation because he owned the rookery behind the church. After the vicar, in a violent hurry, and wiping his forehead with a big red handkerchief, came Sir Roland Ashby, of Dale End, together with his son—this last a personage whom Ralph had once seen coming out of his father's room looking very odd, and either as if he were just going to cry or had been crying, the boy couldn't tell which.

Then came the sound of many voices

through closed doors, Sir Roland Ashby's louder than the rest. Ralph thought he seemed to be scolding somebody very hard indeed; his son, perhaps. Nurse Prettyman had said one day when the young heir to Dale End was riding by on his prancing grey mare, that he was "a bad fellow." Maybe he had been bad now, and that was why the squire was bawling. Anyway, Ralph thought the squire's son a fine sight to see, with his fair curly locks, and white beaver hat curled up at the sides, with his tight pantaloons and long-skirted coat, and the jewel that shone like a star in his satin cravat—even if he was naughty sometimes. It seemed, too, as if Sir Roland was determined to be very severe upon this particular occasion, for Ralph heard him bellow forth a resolve to have somebody "shot," and "see if he didn't—sharp's the word too," and who could it be except the wearer of the curly-brimmed hat and gleaming breast-pin? Ralph thought Sir Roland was a very cruel old man, and drew quite a long sigh over the matter, so impressed was he; but this and all else was quickly driven from his mind when he crept downstairs—strangely unnoticed, for a wonder, in the household—and out into the stable-yard, where old Jeremy was telling the story of the day's events to a select audience, and bringing himself so often into the narrative that it began to appear as though the whole population of Becklington had, to a man, turned to him for consolation and guidance in their perplexity.

"You're like a man who tells folk to pass through a gate, and stands there all the time, blocking up the way so as ne'er a one can pass," said Nurse Prettyman. "It's Jeremy this and Jeremy that until a body would fain think there wasn't a man in all Becklington wi' any wits in him except Jeremy Bindwhistle. It's other folk we want to hear about, man."

Poor Jeremy took up the cruelly broken thread of his narrative again, but not with the same unctuous gusto as before. He kept stumbling over himself, as if he were a stone in his own pathway, but, under the fixed stare of Mistress Prettyman's eye, hurried by all such impediments, and made tolerable headway considering.

He told of the tears that fell like rain down the poor old withered cheeks of Anthony Geddes; how he went staggering about from one open empty safe to another, fingering the rifled locks; how he bent above the smouldering heap that had once been

his cherished ledgers; how the boy Davey scarce once took his eyes off the master; and how Gaylad, the red spaniel with golden-brown eyes and feathered legs and tail, whom every visitor to Becklington Bank knew as well as the manager himself, kept shoving his cold nose first into this hand, then into that, but always returned to crouch at the master's feet, looking up gravely and wistfully at the white troubled face of the man upon whose devoted head such awful sorrow had fallen, swift and unlooked-for as the lightning's flash.

"Eh, but he's a clever beast, is Gaylad; he's more knowledgeable than mony a Christian, and if the Lord would but be as gracious and merciful to him as He was to Balaam's ass, i' the days when wonders did abound, folk's yeds might be less apt to brast wi' puzzlement than now appears the likely dispensation," said Jeremy, slipping in his metaphor hastily, for fear of discouragement, and permitting a feeble smirk of self-complacency to see the day.

He need not have been afraid for the safety of those flowers of eloquence on which he prided himself. Nurse Prettyman was too far gone in troubled amaze to have it left in her to throw metaphorical cold water upon anyone. Her knitting-pins were still, and the rosy colour in her plump cheeks had faded several shades.

"Go on," she said, speaking under her breath; "what more hast thee to tell?"

Jeremy had a good deal to tell. How, so 'twas said, Maister Gabriel Devenant had gone "out of 's yed." How Betsy, Amos Callender's good wife, had had to hide away her husband's razor; and how Farmer Dale "kep' a stout heart," though, as everyone knew, all his savings were at stake.

At this stage of the narrative the interest deepened, if that were possible, for now the eager listeners (comprising by this time even the stable-boy, who lurked in the background, hoping that Jeremy wouldn't see him, listening with all his ears) heard of the rage and riot in the motley crowd; of hands lifted to fling stones at the windows of Stirling's Bank; of the master, looking fit to drop, as well might be, and him so sick this many a day. But brave, too, facing the lot of them, and asking them—praying them—to have patience, and—to wait.

"They'd ha' bin hard-hearted ones, too, if they hadn't a' gi' un his way, for he spoke so gentle-like, so confidin' as you might say, and so sad and sorrowfu' like——"

But here occurred an unlooked-for interruption to Jeremy's stream of rhetoric. Little Ralph, whose dark eyes had been fixed upon the speaker from the shelter of the doorway with its over-arching roof of climbing bean-trees, suddenly made a rush at Nurse Prettyman, buried his face in the folds of her dress, and shaking from head to foot with passionate yet restrained sobs, cried out "not to tell it any more," he "could not bear to hear of all those people being so sad and sorry, and if his dearest dad——"

Ralph could get no more words out, for the sobs choked them back, and Nurse Prettyman, catching up her nursling in her arms, bore him off, casting a fierce and wrathful glance across his head at Jeremy in going, as if he, poor man, were at the bottom of the mischief. Jeremy, crestfallen and amazed at his own discomfiture, began to bite his nails, at which ravishing spectacle the stable-boy's spirit arose within him, finding voice in gibes.

"Thou got a nasty faa' that toime," said he, all one gleeful grin; "that cooms o' bein' so set 'oop wi' sound o' thee own clapper."

"How could I tell t' little 'un was hid amang t' bean-stalks?" pleaded Jeremy, aggrieved; "and wasn't it Mistress Prettyman, her own self, as set me on? Dang such shifty ways, say I!"

"Dang what thee hast a moind," rejoined the rebellious one, "but thee got a nasty faa'."

Then he went to bedding down the mare, whistling at his work as one who is glad at heart.

Meanwhile Mistress Prettyman carried her child upstairs, showering down kisses and terms of loving endearment as thick as rain upon the dark curls huddled against her shoulder; and little Ralph took comfort at last, or seemed to do so. At all events the sobs ceased to shake him, only an odd straggler coming now and again to the fore, like the last lagging drops of a storm that is past. True the child was very silent, and sat in the low embrasure of the nursery-window, with his chin on his hand like a little old man, watching the rooks fly cawing across the dappled sky towards their home; watching the sun's last rays kiss the pretty shining river; and listening to robin keening with his sad sweet evening song the falling of the leaves and the death of the flowers.

But then Ralph was never a talkative child at the best of times; he had spent too

much of his short life in his mother's shaded room, and been told too often to make no noise, but just be still and good "because mamma's head was bad," to grow into a romping laughing boy, full of fun and mischief as became his age. The lesson of self-restraint had been taught him with his alphabet: the lesson of an exquisite capability of sympathy by the passionate love he bore his father. And so it came about that while seeming to watch the rooks, and the sun's good-night, and little robin jerking his scarlet breast from side to side among the branches the better to emphasise his song, Ralph was thinking of the story Jeremy had told of poor Gabriel Devenant, and Farmer Dale, and all the rest who had had their money stolen away by some wicked thief.

Perhaps, thought the child, it was that wicked thief whom the squire wanted to have shot when he should be caught; and not the naughty beautiful fellow with the yellow hair and the shining star in his breast after all. Perhaps then, also, the squire was not cruel but only just, and one ought to like him, though he had such a red face and roared when he spoke.

Ralph's was a righteous little soul, and he wished to be fair to everyone, even to the squire, who was ugly to look at and appalling to listen to.

Ralph never went downstairs when his father and mother were at their evening meal. Mrs. Geoffrey could not eat if she was worried, and, besides, was usually a good deal fatigued with the labours of the toilette. The poor lady hardly ever rose before the day began to wane, but she loved her own faded beauty, and liked to be made to look nice for the evening hours, and to be told that she was still a lovely woman. She craved this sort of mental food from any hand: a foolish gossip looking in upon the banker's sickly wife to pass an hour away, who, having paid her dele of flattery, went away and lamented to others over the sad fate of Geoffrey Stirling in being tied to such a useless fanciful wife; or the servant who brushed out her long fine tresses: it was all the same. Flattery was the fruit Mrs. Geoffrey had a relish for, and she cared not what tree it grew upon.

Later on then, when the evening meal was over, it was the custom for Ralph to go downstairs to the library. First Mistress Prettyman brushed the square-cut locks tidily over his brow, and combed out the long curls that fell upon his shoulders.

Then he donned a pretty little dress of dark velvet, and a lace collar fine and deep; put on rosetted shoes, and softly betook himself down the low broad stairs, never failing to touch one favourite goblin carved in the corner of the dim old oaken banisters as he passed.

On this occasion the child betook himself to the library with all the thoughts of the past hour garnered in his mind. It had grown dark by this, and the candles, in bronze sconces on either side the high and narrow mantel-shelf, were lighted.

Between them hung a circular mirror supported by gilt chains passed through the beak of a gilt eagle. Ralph thought this mirror very beautiful, likening it in his childish fancy to a great round shining eye watching everything that went on in the room, and reflecting them in miniature, like little pictures. All round this room ran panelling of oak breast high; the mantel-shelf was of oak, too, and carved all over with griffins and goblins that were evidently nearly related to Ralph's particular friend upon the stairs. The autumn nights were chill, and a small wood fire burnt cheerily in the low grate, between the dogs of twisted brass on either side.

As Ralph entered, his father, who was warming his hands at the blaze, turned to greet him, and the child was so filled with sorest grief to see him look so pale and wan, that in one bound he was in his arms, with his hands knit about his neck.

Mrs. Geoffrey stirred uneasily upon the couch that stretched from the broad casement window to the fireside, and put her hand feebly up to her brow.

"Hush!" said her husband, catching the well-known domestic signal and answering to it promptly; "mamma's head is bad to-night, Ralph."

Then he gathered his little son between his knees, smoothed down the soft locks upon the boy's forehead, and gently touched the curls that hung about his shoulders.

"Mamma," whose head was bad—when was it not bad?—was a pale and graceful figure seen in the mellow light of mingled fire and candle.

She had been gently and pleasantly excited by the coming of so many visitors an hour ago. The squire had paid her a brazen compliment or two in his own thundering style. His son had once more impressed her as a man of elegance and fashion. She was glad she had dressed a

little earlier than usual, and so had been able to receive them. The result of these pleasant facts was a faint pink flush on either cheek that had not yet died away. She wore a flowing dress, open at the throat, with high frill standing up, and fine white lace kerchief crossed upon her bosom; the sleeves of this gown were full from shoulder to elbow, fitting tightly from thence to the wrist; her hair, fair and rippling, was raised above a high delicately-carved comb, and trained into endless curls piled over either temple.

As a design for the lid of an ornamental box, as a fashion-plate in a magazine of the latest modes, Mrs. Geoffrey would have been perfect. As a woman able to be a true helpmeet to a man, able to meet the day of trouble with him and for him with a brave heart and to give comfort when comfort was needed, she might be looked upon as a failure.

"Father," said Ralph suddenly, laying his two small hands upon his father's shoulders, and looking earnestly up into his face, "do you think they will catch him? Do you think they will catch the wicked thief who has made all the poor people sad and sorry?"

"Who has been talking to the child of these things?" said Mr. Stirling, putting Ralph aside with a momentary hot irritation of manner.

"I dare say it is Prettyman," said his wife. "Besides, Ralph saw me when I was very sadly upset—prostrate, indeed, you may say—this morning. I fear, Geoffrey, that I shall feel the effects of this shock for quite a long time. I was sorry not to get a quiet word with Dr. Turtle this evening, but that is the way with you men, once business matters come before you, you have no attention for anything else—you become selfishly absorbed at once. I have always noticed this to be so."

Ralph's question was still unanswered, but he did not repeat it.

He moved quietly to one side of the fire-place, and set to warming his hands at the blazing pine-knots, looking ridiculously like a miniature of his father as he did so.

Geoffrey Stirling had risen, and was standing leaning one arm upon the mantel-shelf with his head upon his hand.

Looking up Ralph saw the shapely hand tremble, saw the dark eyes full of troubled thought bent upon the fire.

"Daddy is as sorry as I am for those

poor people," thought the child, "but he does not like to speak about it."

For a wonder—a wonder indeed almost without precedent in the annals of the White House—it struck Mrs. Geoffrey that her husband looked both ill and troubled.

She rose from the languidly reclining position that was habitual to her, came to his side, and laid her hand upon his arm.

"Geoffrey," she said, "I wouldn't worry myself too much about all this if I were you. I dare say it will all come right in the end, and, you know, doctors say that worry is at the bottom of half the complaints that exist. If I had taken to worrying about things I should have been in my grave long since."

He was very gentle with her, very grateful for her unwonted thought of him; sympathetic, too, when she declared herself, half an hour later, completely shattered by the day's worries, and obliged to retire to her chamber, there to have duly administered to her five-and-twenty drops of camphor-julep without delay.

Meanwhile little Ralph had stolen quietly upstairs, forgetting even to touch the friendly griffin on the way, so sad was he.

In all the sweet experiences of the years that went to the making up of his young life, when could he remember his father putting him aside, speaking with such a sudden change of look and voice, as he had done to-night?

Never—never. And now—what should he do?

Disconsolate, the child crept into the embrasure of the nursery window, that favourite post of vantage, and to him there came the setter-pup staggering on uncertain legs, scrambling on to his knees, crawling up his breast, and finally thrust a small cold nose into his neck.

Thus Nurse Prettyman presently found the pair; the round tawny head of the pup wet with his master's tears.

Being a woman of prompt action, she despatched the one to his basket in the corner of the wood-cupboard, the other to his bed.

"Be very kind to him," said the child, handing over the little dog to Nurse Prettyman's tender mercies; "he has been trying to comfort me."

"But whatever's been and vexed you so, Master Ralph?" said the good woman, looking at the wet dark eyes in some amaze.

"I do not wish to tell you: I do not wish to tell any one," replied the boy with a dignity wonderful in one of so few inches.

And Mistress Prettyman dare not ask any further questions. That was the way with Master Ralph; he had a trick of the hand and a set of the head when he was pleased to be a bit wilful that was his father over again, and which none cared to gainsay.

The terrible eventful day was over, and Geoffrey Stirling kept solitary vigil. Up and down, up and down the library he paced, his arms folded across his breast, his head thrown back, the hair tossed from his brow, his eyes gazing fixedly and defiantly at—what?

Thoughts that were as phantoms—thin air taking tangible form and shape. With these he wrestled as Jacob with the angel.

But Geoffrey Stirling's ghostly foes were not of heavenly origin; rather were they akin to the goblin-forms that grinned and mowed at him from the carven mantel as the firelight glinted on them, gifting distended lip and globular eye with life and movement.

Up and down, up and down paced the restless feet—weary conflict raging in the heart that beat so heavily in Geoffrey Stirling's breast.

All at once he stopped short, and drawing a long deep breath, leant against the lintel of the curtained window.

What ailed him?

A sharp quick shudder passed through his frame—the sort of deadly thrill that superstition tells us we feel when some careless foot steps above the plot of ground destined to be our last earthly resting-place.

His eyes seemed to sink in their hollow orbits; the furrows in his face deepened.

Some terrible, some sinister influence was about him, near him, wrapping him round as closely as the air he breathed.

Was it the room or the night itself that felt so stifling?

With shaking hand he pulled back the curtain, laying half of the diamond-paned casement bare.

His fingers had closed on the latch; he was about to try and breathe the pure fresh air of heaven, when, with a strangled cry he fell back, grasping the curtain convulsively, and with starting eyes fixed on the dull glass.

What had he seen there as he bent to the catch of the window?

A white face, almost touching the pane—a pair of sombre menacing eyes, dark and full of fire, staring back into his own.

"It was a trick of fancy—a mere trick," he gasped at last, passing his hand across his brow where the beads of sweat stood dank and thick. "The strain of such a day as this would have unnerved any man, any man, however strong."

He pushed open the casement, fastening the hook in its stanchion. It seemed to him, as he did so, that a shadow passed quickly between him and the moonlight, and was lost among the trees. But this, too, was surely but the phantom of an overwrought brain, for when he looked again there was nothing but the silvered grass, the wealth of gently-stirring branches tipped with radiance, and the faint far sound of the water sobbing against the boat by the gateway place. Peace seemed to be over all the sleeping world, and shortly from the tower of Becklington Church rang out twelve slow mellow strokes, each one vibrating and then dying on the quiet air.

Was that midnight chime the signal for some heavenly messenger, with angel face and tender pitiful eyes, to bring rest and peace to the troubled heart of the solitary watcher?

What was the white-robed visitant standing at the door, that had opened slowly, as if pushed by a timid and uncertain hand?

Was it in truth some unlooked-for supernatural guest, stealing thus unawares on Geoffrey Stirling's solitude?

Or was it only little Ralph, the white night-dress that fell to his feet gathered in one hand lest he should stumble, his curls floating on his shoulders, and a small white troubled face raised pleadingly?

At the sound of the opening door, Geoffrey Stirling had started and turned, drawing in his breath sharply between

his teeth, and staring at the child with fixed incredulous stare from under knitted brows.

Then, with that swift sweet smile that ever chased all trace of sternness from lip and eye, he held out his hand.

"Ralph, my boy," he said, drawing him tenderly to his side, forgetting for a time—or so it seemed—the strangeness of the child's appearance there at such an hour.

Was it the wraith of his own innocent childish days that the man watched so dreamily? Was it the fair presentment of himself as he had been long years ago, when first he learnt to pray at his mother's knee?

Ralph, troubled and awed by the strange steadfast gaze of the eyes looking into his, trembled, afraid of he knew not what.

"Mine dear," he said softly (it was a pretty trick of speech his father had taught him), "are you angry with me still?"

"Angry! Not I, my darling," replied Geoffrey, passing his hand across his eyes as one awaking from a dream. "But how comes Ralph to be wandering about like a little ghost at this time of night—eh? What will Nurse Prettyman say?"

"I don't know," said the child with a quaint air of regal indifference to that worthy woman's feeling in the matter; "I wanted to come to you, and I came. I could not sleep; I was all the time thinking of those poor people, so sad and sorry, and with no money to buy bread. You are not angry now, so I may say it—mayn't I? And see: I want you to take this, daddy. It is my very own, you know, so I can do what I like with it—can't I?—and I don't care about saving up for a watch any more. I want you to give it to them, and to say how sorry little Ralph is, and that he sent it."

Ralph had slipped one hand about his father's neck. The other he held up before him, and there, in the little pink palm, lay a golden coin—all his precious store.

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